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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000085

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SUBJECT: NEW INDIAN ENVOY UPBEAT ON BANGLADESH TIES

REF: A. NEW DELHI 109

[¶](#)B. DHAKA 61

[¶](#)C. DHAKA 27

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty for reasons 1.4 (b) and 1.4 (d)

Summary

(C) India's newly-arrived High Commissioner Rajeet Mitter gave the Ambassador an upbeat first-hand account of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent state visit to New Delhi. The Indian High Commissioner stressed the need to build upon the foundation established during the visit. Improved security cooperation since Hasina took office in January 2009 had been critical to enabling progress on other issues. The Ambassador underscored strong United States support for efforts by India and Bangladesh to improve relations, promote greater regional integration, and enhance security cooperation. Mitter is likely to play a lower-key role than his predecessor, whose public comments often gave fodder to those critical of India's actions in Bangladesh.

Visit Readout: Drastically Improving India-Bangladesh Ties

[¶](#)2. (C) New Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Rajeet Mitter, paid a courtesy-call on the Ambassador January 24. They discussed a wide-range of topics, including Bangladesh's economic situation, the lasting effects of the March 2009 Bangladesh Rifles mutiny, and both countries' trade relationships with Bangladesh. Most of the discussion centered on the India - Bangladesh bilateral relationship, which High Commissioner Mitter characterized as drastically improving. Ambassador Moriarty agreed with this assessment and reiterated U.S. support for this rapprochement.

Post Visit Implementation: Connectivity and Momentum Key

[¶](#)3. (C) Commenting on Prime Minister Hasina's January 11 - 13, 2010 visit to New Delhi, High Commissioner Mitter said India had a "genuine desire to start afresh and build a positive long-term relationship" with Bangladesh (Ref A). Mitter said connectivity had been the largest achievement to come out of the meetings. He noted that increased train and road access and increased communication between the two countries would transform the India - Bangladesh relationship. Mitter stressed the trip was a good start but acknowledged that keeping up the momentum of the trip would be essential to its long-term success (NOTE: We have heard the same from our Bangladeshi interlocutors (Ref B). END NOTE). Mitter was optimistic about the long-term, saying that India now believed it had a genuine commitment to work together from Bangladesh.

## Continued Importance of Counter Terror Cooperation

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¶4. (C) High Commissioner Mitter agreed that the Bangladesh Government's attitude towards counter terrorism underwent a sea-change because of the November 2008 Mumbai attacks. For the past year, Bangladesh had been much more serious in its counterterrorism efforts and was well-aware of the danger of an attack on India planned on Bangladeshi soil. Apart from what had been agreed upon in New Delhi, Mitter did not hint at any new Indian efforts to work with Bangladesh on counterterrorism matters. The new Indian High Commissioner's constructive tone in describing Bangladesh's counterterrorism cooperation with India contrasted with the sharp criticisms frequently made by his predecessor.

### Comment

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¶5. (C) In the run-up to Prime Minister Hasina's visit to New Delhi, we encouraged Bangladesh to engage more fully and more genuinely with India (Ref C). We are now seeking opportunities to support the outcome and urge Bangladesh to maintain forward momentum. High Commissioner Mitter comes with a strong reputation as a practiced diplomat and will benefit from the afterglow of the summit. He will likely be more reserved than his predecessor, who often sparked controversy and was frequently criticized by Dhaka's chattering class for his less diplomatic comments. Facts on the ground -- including the Bangladesh Government to hand over to the Indians a number of ULFA -- will also make Mitter's task considerably easier. With the hard work of

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implementation ahead of both governments and a focus on technical issues related to interconnectivity, Mitter seems like a steady hand on the ground. Improved Bangladesh-India relations are in the United States' interest, and an objective we continue to pursue across the board.

MORIARTY